



Vol. 1, No. 33, November 15, 2019

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From the Editor

Last week I briefly mentioned how our writing group pulled up a character generator and came up with a unique character for us each to write a short story about. I know I enjoy reading about how other authors end up developing their own characters, so I thought I'd share how this turned out for me. This week, I'm sharing the process of how 'chatty teacher who is always dreaming of the future' turned into Annie Brewster and how her story ended up being set in Colorado Springs during the summer of 1893. I'll share the completed short story with you in the December 27th issue.

Instead of an author interview this week, we have the details for a **Flash Fiction Contest**. The winner will win a \$50 gift card. The contest is open to subscribers to the Pages of the Past newsletter (It's free. Links to sign up are on the contest page.) The deadline for entry is December 20, 2019 (midnight). Stories should be 400-600 words and be written to one of three picture prompts.

The stories will be printed in the January 3rd newsletter. Open voting will run until January 12th. The winner will be announced in the January 17th newsletter. (Photo prompts and all details on pages 5-6)

There are five weeks before the stories are due. On your mark....get set....Go!

Trisha

texastrishafaye@yahoo.com

Need help with background research in writing your historical novel?

I have 18 books and many articles in print on subjects varying from 17th Century life, Salem Witch Trials, pirates, slavery and the Underground Railroad, labor history, and women, to the Civil War and Japan. I just completed researching the 1919 Flu Epidemic for Smithsonian Channel's 'Hidden History' television series. Reasonable fee includes bibliography with primary sources and websites. Prompt turn-around and fact-checking guaranteed.

Contact Juliet Haines Mofford at jmofford1@yahoo.com

Creation of a Character

Annie Brewster didn't exist a week ago.

Characters can be created in many various ways. Sometimes our fictional creations are based on a real-life person or real-life activities. Often they are 'born' from overhearing a conversation or a phrase that sparks an idea, be it storyline or character, in a writer's brain. Sometimes a new character comes into being in response to a photograph we've seen, an item that lends itself to a tale, or a headline in the news.

These examples are just a small sampling of how some characters come to life on the pages that we write. There are many other ways. Each author has their own methods, and even with each author, the characters come about by different means.

This is the story about the birth of Annie Brewster. I know that I enjoy reading how other authors develop their characters, plot lines, and stories, so I thought I'd share the process with how Annie Brewster came to be.

A week ago I had no intention of creating a new character. And then, I went to my weekly writer's group. During the meeting, the subject of National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo, or NANO as I typically refer to it) came up. A random character generator was shared with the group. Now, I usually wouldn't even pay attention. I have no problems with coming up with characters. To be truthful, I have more characters and story ideas than I'll probably ever get written. So I wasn't even curious.

But, there are moments in life, even after the age of 60, when peer pressure raises its ugly head and beckons. "Do you all want to try it and see what it comes up with?"

"Sure!" "Yes!" "Absolutely!" It seems I was the odd one out as all the other responses were enthusiastic. So, to join in the group and be a part of the character-building experience, I played along.

The generator worked with three different categories. The initial of our first name gave an adjective. The day of birth gave an occupation. The month of birth gave a desire.

What I ended up with was: (a) chatty (b) teacher (c) who is always dreaming of the future.

Cute. Nice. End of story. I had no intention of doing anything with this.

And then the group said, "Let's write a piece of flash fiction using this character and bring it next week."

Arghhhh! So now, instead of focusing on NANO, this week I'm trying to write a short story about some teacher that was thrust into my life.

And she's got to be chatty. Now that one may be a bit of a problem. I'm okay with one on one conversations. But the larger the group starts getting, the quieter I end up being. Fortunately, there are several people in my life who *are not introverts* and fit the chatty definition quite nicely. I can use them for inspiration.

The always dreaming of the future. No problem with that. I think my whole life I've always been looking ahead and having dreams and desires that I want to do, learn, see, or experience.

A teacher. That shouldn't be too difficult.

But now that I have a character, I need a time and place for the story. With much of my writing lately being in the historical fiction realm, I'd like it to be sometime in the past. I remembered seeing some 'Rules for Teachers'. I think the first time I remember seeing them was in a historic, one-room schoolhouse in Oak Glen, California. But I think I remembered seeing other rules online at one time or another.

So Google and I had a hot date. I actually discovered four different 'Rules for Teachers – from 1872, 1886, 1915, and 1923. Tough choices!

I liked the 1872 rules. They talked about filling the lamps and cleaning the chimneys (of the lamps), along with making pen nibs, not being able to marry, smoke, use liquor, frequent poor halls, and more. Oh, a woman teacher couldn't ride in a buggy with a man that wasn't her father or brother, either.

In 1886 the teacher had to check the outhouses daily. (Plenty of old catalogues available at the School Board office) She couldn't use bloomers for cycling, couldn't have her skirts slit to expose her ankles, and couldn't join any Feminist Movement, such as the Suffragettes.

In 1915, there wasn't much more freedom. She couldn't marry or keep company with men. Loitering downtown in the ice cream store was also forbidden. She must wear at least two petticoats. (Whew! Good thing I'm not a teacher in 1915)

The 1923 contract I found was similar to the rules of 1923, but what I liked with that was it had the salary listed as \$75 per month.

Decisions, decisions. I like writing in all of these periods and still couldn't narrow the choices down. But then I got to thinking – the World's Columbian Exposition was in Chicago in 1893. Maybe I could place the teacher in Chicago and use that event to tie in as part of her dreams of the future.

So I started doing some research in that vein and found an unexpected link.

In 1893, Katharine Lee Bates visited the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, then traveled by train through the wheat fields in Kansas to Colorado to teach a short summer session. While in Colorado Springs, she visited Pikes Peak and ended up penning the words to the poem "Pikes Peak" – which eventually became 'America the Beautiful.'

Ah-ha! Now, this was an interesting little snippet of information. I was starting to get excited about this little story that I never planned on writing.

Then I clicked to one more page about Katharine and America the Beautiful.

"The first draft of "America the Beautiful" was hastily jotted down in a notebook during the summer of 1893, which Bates spent teaching English at The Colorado Summer School (affiliated with Colorado College) in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Later she remembered:

One day some of the other teachers and I decided to go on a trip to 14,000-foot Pikes Peak. We hired a prairie wagon. Near the top we had to leave the wagon and go the rest of the way on mules. I was very tired. But when I saw the view, I felt great joy. All the wonder of America seemed displayed there, with the sea-like expanse."

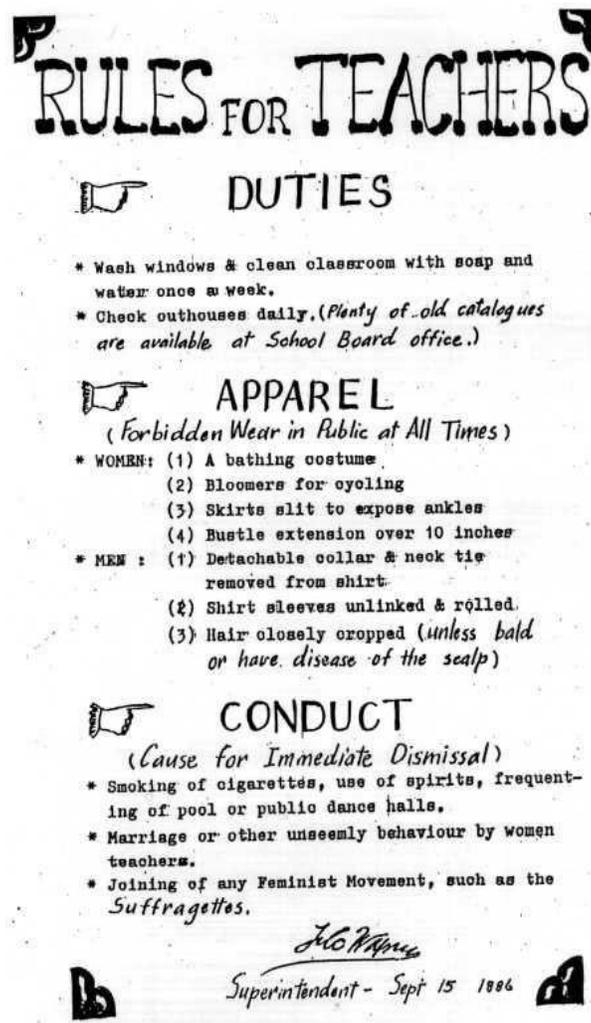
Katharine Lee Bates was a college professor, a poet, and a published author. She wrote the words to a poem that a beloved song that most of us can sing by heart. She penned these words after a trip – *with other teachers* – to Pikes Peak!

Bingo! The story was still set in 1893, but it just moved from Chicago to Colorado Springs.

Now while Katharine is a most interesting woman, I didn't want to write from her viewpoint. I wanted a fictional character (besides, I don't even know if Katharine was chatty or not!) so I decided to make Katharine a friend of a friend. She would become a mentor to my fictional teacher and would encourage her in her dreams of the future.

Annie Brewster was born, along with Ella Grant, who is the friend that introduces Annie to Katharine.

Except Annie took over. The 'flash fiction' piece for my writing group, which was supposed to be 'around 1,000 words' grew. I tried to control Annie. I told her we only had 1,000 words – but she didn't listen to me. She took over and turned it into a longer piece. "But there's more to tell," she kept repeating. And thus is the tale of the creation of chatty, impetuous Annie Brewster.



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Flash Fiction Contest Time!

It's Flash Fiction Contest Time! Enter your flash fiction story for a chance to win a \$50 gift card.

Write a 400-600 word story to one of the three pictures below. Email your entry to texastrishafaye@yahoo.com with 'CONTEST ENTRY – (title of your story)' in the subject line.

Entries are due by **midnight, Friday, December 20th**.

All contestants must be a subscriber to Pages of the Past weekly newsletter. (It's FREE. The ONLY thing you'll receive is the weekly newsletters. Link below.)

The stories will be printed in the January 3rd newsletter. A PDF will be compiled with all the stories and posted on Facebook, allowing others a chance to read the stories and send in their votes. The contest will run until January 12th at midnight. The winner will be announced in the January 17th newsletter.

The winner receives a \$50 gift card.

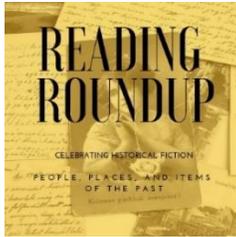
Use one of the three photographs below as a prompt for your story.





**Here's the link to subscribe to Pages of the Past newsletter.
It's free. You'll only get the newsletter, nothing else.
[*Get Pages of the Past delivered to your inbox every Friday!*](#)**

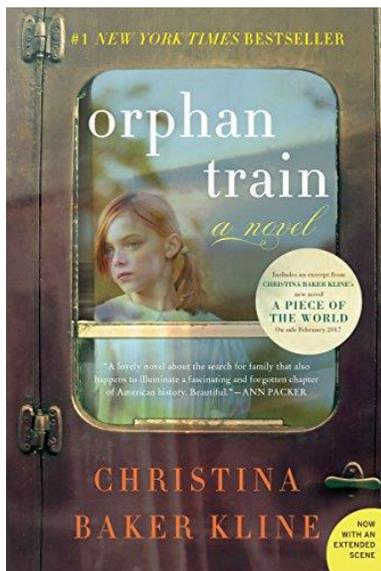
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The 1930s

Orphan Train

Christina Baker Kline



Between 1854 and 1929, so-called orphan trains ran regularly from the cities of the East Coast to the farmlands of the Midwest, carrying thousands of abandoned children whose fates would be determined by pure luck. Would they be adopted by a kind and loving family, or would they face a childhood and adolescence of hard labor and servitude?

As a young Irish immigrant, Vivian Daly was one such child, sent by rail from New York City to an uncertain future a world away. Returning east later in life, Vivian leads a quiet, peaceful existence on the coast of Maine, the memories of her upbringing rendered a hazy blur. But in her attic, hidden in trunks, are vestiges of a turbulent past.

Seventeen-year-old Molly Ayer knows that a community service position helping an elderly woman clean out her home is the only thing keeping her out of juvenile hall. But as Molly helps Vivian sort through her keepsakes and possessions, she discovers that she and

Vivian aren't as different as they appear. A Penobscot Indian who has spent her youth in and out of foster homes, Molly is also an outsider being raised by strangers, and she, too, has unanswered questions about the past.

Moving between contemporary Maine and Depression-era Minnesota, *Orphan Train* is a powerful novel of upheaval and resilience, of second chances, and unexpected friendship.

Authors: Do you have a historical fiction book or short story that you'd like featured in Pages of the Past? Email me at texastrishafaye@yahoo.com to see about scheduling your book or short story in a future issue.

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